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ABSTRACT

Government officials, media critics, and the public at large appear to believe that the media "cause" or strongly motivate acts of terrorism. However, analysis using Kenneth Burke's dramatistic method can explain political terrorism without reference to desire for coverage. Terrorism would occur because of its symbolic value even with no media coverage. However, when terrorism passes into insurgency--that is, when terrorists find themselves capable of holding enemy territory and hence having traditional tactical and strategic objectives, the Burkean analysis may be less useful because communications to parties outside the inner circle of terrorists may serve instrumental objectives, while Burke's analysis best explains the consummatory functions of symbolic activity. Burke's analysis of society can also be applied to terrorist societies to explain their violence. The dramatistic approach can make it possible to predict the forms in which terrorism will appear, and to pursue efforts to control it. And if the calls for censorship and other verbal victimizations and mortifications of the media can be explained, it may be possible to avoid falling prey to them when confronted with the plausible but unsubstantiated arguments that media coverage aids and abets terrorists. (Eighty-three notes are included.) (MS)

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THE MEDIA AND THE TERRORIST: NOT INNOCENTS, BUT BOTH VICTIMS

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Presented to the Panel:

Three Case Studies in the Mass Media's Portrayal of War and Terrorism

A Panel Co-Sponsored by the Mass Communication and Rhetoric and Public Address Interest Groups
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The Media and the Terrorist:

Not Innocents, But Both Victims

Ralph E. Dowling

> And when each day's "reality" is "dramatically" put together for us by enterprises that comb the entire world for calamities, conflicts, and dire forebodings, such a documentary replica of the arena confuses us as to the actual *recipe* of motives on which the world is operating.[1]

The mass media of communication often are criticized for causing violence in viewers--particularly terrorists. This paper explores the idea that the media "cause" or strongly motivate acts of terrorism. Government officials, media critics, and the public at large appear to believe sincerely in such a causal relationship. In a poll of police chiefs of large American cities, 93% said they "believed live tv coverage of terrorist acts encourage terrorism [*sic*]."[2]

The chiefs' beliefs evidence the prevalence of this perception in government. The chiefs also are typical in their support of limitations on media coverage of terrorism. Local officials are not alone in these beliefs. A former undersecretary of state has said, "television simply has to come to grips with the fact that these terrorists do what they do, at least in part, because of the publicity" the media provide.[3] Kissinger has suggested that "what the media ought to consider is not to carry anything including the terrorists."[4]

Academicians have too willingly accepted the notion that terrorists act primarily to bask in publicity or to use their notoriety to gain an outlet for "propaganda" expounding their ideologies. Laqueur believes "terrorists and newspapermen [*sic*] share the assumption that those whose names make the headlines have power, that getting one's name on the front page is a major political achievement."[5] Decker and Rainey once saw terrorism "as an attempt to communicate radical ideological arguments to an audience."[6] Media critics of every stripe have criticized television in particular for its coverage of terrorism. The *Columbia Journalism Review* reported that the networks "played into the hands of the terrorists by giving them a forum for their views and demands."[7] Novak feared television "got out the story the terrorists wanted out."[8] Alter questioned whether coverage of the hijacking of TWA flight 847 was "prolonging the ordeal by in effect handing the terrorists a megaphone."[9] Lofton thought "the networks allowed themselves to be used as a platform and a conduit for terrorist propaganda."[10]

Public denunciations of media coverage of terrorism are common. Letters-to-the-editor and public opinion polls reveal a widespread opinion that coverage causes terrorism and ought to be curtailed, either voluntarily or by statute. This is not limited to the United States. A French poll found that 55% of those polled wanted the French media to speak "as little as possible" about French hostages being held in Libya "in order not to give publicity to the hostage-

takers."[11] Gerbner reports that after a political kidnapping 8 out of 10 Germans favored an embargo on news coverage.[12]

A major purpose of this paper is to refute the idea that desire for media coverage is a primary motivation for terrorism. Burke's dramatistic method can explain terrorism without reference to desire for coverage. Dowling has refuted the arguments supporting the claim that terrorism is motivated by desire for coverage.[13]

My thesis is that terrorism would occur because of its symbolic value even with no media coverage. But, I must provide some qualifiers. First, when terrorism passes into insurgency--that is, when terrorists find themselves capable of holding enemy territory and hence having traditional tactical and strategic objectives, the Burkean analysis may be less useful because communications to parties outside the inner circle of terrorists may serve instrumental objectives, while Burke's analysis best explains the consummatory functions of symbolic activity. Second, I am limiting my study to non-state terrorist *groups* operating for *political* purposes. I am not speculating about state actors, the mentally ill, nor about the criminal performing terrorist acts for profit.[14]

Terrorism As Human Social Action

Burke's theory of social action emphasizes hierarchy--the symbolically generated and supported principles and practices by which human societies are organized.[15] Burke's rhetoric explores how people relate to one another in society through the use of symbols. Burke would agree with Dance and Larson that "human communication . . . is the process through which social bonds are established and maintained, human relationships are defined, and almost all forms of social behavior are manifested."[16] Burke might also agree that rhetoric is the study of "the uniquely human ability to use symbols to communicate with one another."[17]

Analysis of terrorism should begin with an understanding that it is human *action*. Action is distinct from *motion* because humans can *act*, while things can but *move*, and this forces us to examine the motives that surround *human* action because of its symbolic nature. These realizations are central to Burke's theories of human social action.[18] Burke says that human action differs from motion *in kind* because humans are "symbol-using animal[s]," *homo symbolicum*, and because the use of symbols for identification and communication makes human action unique.

Because humans *act*, Burke's dramatistic approach is not a metaphor for human behavior; it literally depicts human behavior. Burke's dramatism is a method for analyzing human relations and motives. By analyzing human actions we may understand how humans relate and why they act as they do.[19]

Duncan has applied dramatistic analysis to the formation and operation of human society. The most basic proposition of Duncan's view of society is that "society arises in, and continues to exist through, the communication of significant symbols."[20] Humankind forms societies to resolve the conflict between individuals' physical estrangement from one another and their innate desire to bridge this estrangement by becoming *consubstantial* with and *identifying* with others.

The formation of societies produces social orders "expressed through hierarchies which differentiate men [*sic*] into ranks, classes, and status groups."[21] Hierarchies relate people as equals, superiors, and inferiors and are supported by "principles of order . . . believed 'necessary' to social integration."[22] The principles are necessary to convince people to accept their assigned roles in society--an exercise in persuasion. But, these principles contain the seeds of their own destruction. They give rise to commandments--the "thou-shalt-nots" which dictate appropriate and inappropriate behavior. These commandments, and the human inability to obey them, produce a cycle:

> In sum:
> In the Iron Law of History
> That welds Order and Sacrifice:
>
> Order leads to Guilt
> (for who can keep commandments)
> Guilt needs Redemption
> (for who would not be cleansed)
> Redemption needs Redeemer
> (which is to say, a Victim!)
>
> Order
> Through Guilt
> To Victimage
> (hence: Cult of the Kill).[23]

Order is a motive for human behavior arising from individuals' "need to find a place" in the world. Order is hierarchical because it dictates persons' relationships to one another.[24] A hierarchy must persuade those living under it in order to command them how to live. But, since people cannot always obey commandments, guilt arises. Guilt is individuals' realization that they have violated the "sacred" principles necessary to the society which has given them order and a sense of place.

Guilt motivates persons to seek redemption. Redemption, however, requires the sacrifice of a victim. Expiating guilt by doing harm to self Burke calls *mortification*. Sacrificing of a scapegoat other Burke calls *victimage*. Burke believes "the promoting of social cohesion through victimage is 'normal' and 'natural'" and not restricted to ancient or primitive societies.[25] The use of scapegoats has the "ability to establish social cohesion and . . . consubstantial

identification." Victimage serves "as a means of establishing order because it serves to unite a society against a common enemy."[26]

Victimage, then, is essential to provide the individual suffering from guilt with "redemption, rebirth, or a new identity." According to Foss, Foss and Trapp,

> The rhetoric of rebirth . . . involves movement through three steps--pollution, purification, and redemption. Pollution is the initial state of guilt, an unclean condition of sins and burdens; purification is the step of cleansing or catharsis, where the guilt is sloughed off; and redemption is the stage of cleanliness in which a new state--whether physical, spiritual, or psychological--is achieved.[27]

To achieve purification, Scott and Smith have noted, radicals may "work out the rite of the kill symbolically. Harassing, embarrassing, disarming the enemy may suffice, especially if he [*sic*] is finally led to admit his [*sic*] impotence in the face of the superior will of the revolutionary." Victimage provides rebirth as radicals, in "the act of overcoming his [*sic*] enemy, he [*sic*] who supplants demonstrates his [*sic*] own worthiness, effacing the mark, whatever it may be--immaturity, weakness, subhumanity--that his [*sic*] enemy has set upon his [*sic*] brow."[28]

Radicals and terrorists are parts of rebel societies with their own symbols, hierarchies, sacred principles, and need for redemption from guilt caused by violating these principles. Hence, Burke's analysis of society can be applied to terrorist societies to explain their violence.

Terrorist Violence As Social Action

Societies are dynamic because "order is always a resolution of acceptance, doubt, or rejection of the principles that are believed to guarantee such order."[29] Society must provide "means to expiate guilt arising from disobedience," for "no society can survive unless symbolic resources are available for expiating guilt arising out of failures . . . to uphold principles of hierarchy."[30] When people doubt principles of order, "victimage passes into revolt." Even society's use of force "must rest on belief. The victim must believe in his [*sic*] guilt and in the right of his [*sic*] executioners to punish him [*sic*]. . . . The revolutionary is an enemy, not a victim."[31]

Terrorists are those who cannot expiate their guilt under the reigning symbols of order. They form societies that allow expiation. "One notable characteristic of the rhetoric of the first stage of a revolution stems from the revolutionary's need for identification because in the process of divorcing himself [*sic*] from the images of the past, he [*sic*] welcomes new symbols to restore his [*sic*] security."[32] These new symbols may simply adapt symbols of the old order. As Leeman notes, "the Tupamaros created 'People's prisons,' the Shi'ites hold trials of 'CIA spies,' and

those found guilty are not murdered, but 'executed,'" and terrorists of every stripe justify their atrocities by "arguing implicitly and explicitly that they are 'at war.'"[33]

Hardman notes that terrorists inevitably challenge the sacred nature of the existing social order as a prelude to establishing their new one. They do so by showing that the existing social order does not respect sacred principles. Terrorism seeks to portray the "existing government as a usurper of the people's power or of the historic rights of a certain dynasty or class."[34]

Seen this way, terrorism and revolution are not aberrations, but another ordering of society. Terror and revolution are only aberrations by the standards provided by the principles upon which mainstream society is built. Viewed as a species of human social action, terrorism and revolution become understandable.

The violent deeds of terrorists are committed to sustain their new social order. Burke provides this illustration:

> With the evidence of the Crucifixion before us, we cannot deny that consubstantiality *is* established by common involvement in a killing. But one must not isolate the killing itself as the essence of the exaltation. Rather, one can account for the consubstantiality as arising from common participation in a notable, or solemn experience. Thus, we once saw the history of a human society in miniature, grounded in a rhetoric of primitive magic. Some boys, about ten years of age, had been playing in a vacant lot. They stirred up a rattlesnake, which the father of one boy killed with a hoe. They had their pictures taken, dangling the dead snake. Immediately after, they organized the Rattlesnake Club. Their members were made consubstantial by the sacrifice of this victim, representing dangers and triumphs they had shared in common. The snake was a sacred offering; by its death it provided the spirit for this magically united band.[35]

The shared killing, maiming, and risk-taking done by terrorists are attempts to maintain their new society by proving their worth in accordance with their principles of order. "For it is only by acting together under great community symbols that men [*sic*] identify and thus rid themselves of loneliness and despair. Men [*sic*] need each other in hate as well as love. . . . Men [*sic*] do not want to communicate *about* love and hate, but to *express* them in community with other men [*sic*]."[36]

Because "social relations are *dramatic* relations . . . men [*sic*] seek society, brotherhood, and love." But, they do so "through community dramas of guilt, redemption, victimage, and hierarchy." These dramas often involve the symbolic or actual killing of a scapegoat whose killing purifies those involved in the drama. In explaining war as a normal part of mainstream society, Duncan continued, In this sense, all wars are conducted as "holy" wars. The enemy must be defeated not only to gain . . . any of the alleged "rational" reasons for war, but because his [*sic*] defeat and punishment will relieve us of our guilt and fear . . . as we wound and kill . . . our love for each other deepens . . . our hatred of each other is being purged."[37]

Because "victimage is the basic form of expiation in the communication of social order," we should expect terrorist societies to use victimage for this purpose.[38] The seemingly senseless killings by terrorists serve the same function for terrorist society that wars and punishment of criminals and dissidents perform for mainstream society. Mainstream societies have their own rituals, as Duncan has observed:

> This model of victimage is familiar in our time. We turn in horror from Stalin's purges and Hitler's death camps, but we face the terrible revelation that victimage works. Man [*sic*] is a *social* beast of prey. He [*sic*] does not kill for food, but to achieve "order" in society. Thus before we create models of social order which tell us what happens *after* or *before* conflict, . . . we must develop models which tell us something about what goes on *during* conflict.[39]

Terrorists sometimes seem conscious that they are maintaining a new social order. Begin has written about the Irgun's use of victimage to remove the negative labels put on them by their enemies. "The 'smear' with which our enemies and opponents tried to belittle us was to us a source of pride. People who had been humiliated and degraded became proud fighters in our ranks, free and equal men and women."[40] An anonymous writer for the RAF (Baader-Meinhof Group) wrote that becoming an urban guerrilla, "Presupposes that one is . . . sure that the whole anti-Semite-criminal-subhuman-murderer-arsonist syndrome they use against revolutionaries, all that shit that they alone are able to abstract and articulate and that still influences some comrades' attitude to us, that none of this has any effect on us."[41]

Begin also wrote of the "order" of Irgun society, writing that "a fighting underground is a veritable state in miniature: a state at war. It has its army, its police, its own courts. It has at its disposal all the executive arms of a state." Begin also described the Irgun as a society operating under symbols of order, including unity, equality, the melting pot, loyalty, ability, and upward mobility for the able.

> In the Shock Units and in all the divisions of the Irgun we had members who came from all Jewish communities and of all classes. We had people from Tunis and Harbin, Poland and Persia, France and Yemen, Belgium and Iraq, Czechoslovakia and Syria; we had natives of the United States and Bokhara, of England, Scotland, Argentina and South Africa, and most of all, of Eretz Israel itself. We were the melting-pot of the Jewish nation in miniature. We never asked about origins: we demanded only loyalty and ability. Our comrades from the eastern communities felt happy and at home in the Irgun. Nobody ever displayed any stupid airs of superiority toward them; and they were thus helped to free themselves of any unjustified sense of inferiority they may have harbored. They were fighting comrades and that was enough. They could, and did, attain the highest positions of responsibility.[42]

As opposed to the unity and society found *within* terrorist society, the enemy is seen by terrorists as less than human and deserving of death. Killing others who are like us is never as easy as killing others who are identifiably "them," and not "us." For, as Jenkins has observed, "As we have seen throughout history, the presumed approval of God for the killing of pagans, heathens, or infidels can permit acts of great destruction and self-destruction."[43]

The killing of innocents outside of terrorist societies is one form of victimage. By risking their own lives in armed confrontations with authorities, terrorists also practice mortification. As Duncan notes, when "we cannot find easy outgoing relief or cannot project our guilt upon another, we circle back upon ourselves."[44] Terrorists can punish themselves to expiate guilt, but this punishment must be done on the terms of the their social order. Mortification may take the form of foolhardy risk-taking in violent encounters with authorities, or the martyrdom of suicide missions.

Terrorists sometimes seem aware of the symbolic nature of their acts. Harkabi notes *Al Fatah*'s belief that "Violence has a therapeutic effect, purifying society of its diseases." *Al Fatah* believes "violence will purify the individuals from venom, it will redeem the colonized from inferiority complex, it will return courage to the countryman." *Al Fatah* said of Israel, "blazing our armed revolution inside the occupied territory is a healing medicine for all our people's diseases."[45] These statements are more than metaphor-stretching by unbalanced minds. Given Burke's framework we can understand this rhetoric's appeal to terrorists, and why they practice violence.

In the most extreme case, terrorists might construct a new social order around perpetual violence. Such a society would have principles of order alien to any existing society and these principles might require perpetual violence--both victimage and mortification--in order for guilt to be avoided and redeemed. This is the kind of social order found in Miller's description of renowned terrorist Abu Nidal.

> In following Abu Nidal's trail over the past decade, one fact is unmistakable. The violence and terror he sows is not directed at any achievable political goal. While Abu Nidal pursues tactical ends--publicity, intimidation--he does not seek to use terror to achieve Palestinian rights or a state in his lifetime or even in that of his children. For him the struggle against Zionism and all of its supporters is timeless and continues without regard for accommodation, compromise, or negotiation. "The fact that the Zionists have taken my Arab homeland is for me more than a crime," Abu Nidal asserted last fall. "For me it would be a crime if we permitted the Zionist to leave our homeland alive." It is here, in a world of grievances that can never be addressed, of injustices that can never be righted and of unending vengeance that Abu Nidal operates--impervious and opposed to all forms of accommodation or moderation.[46]

Leaders of dominant social orders see terrorism as an attack on social order. Though not a physical threat, because most are weak and unpopular, terrorists pose a *rhetorical* threat--they present an alternative. Government leaders often respond to terrorism by gathering together powerful symbols and sacred principles of social order. American Secretary of State Schultz aroused the principles of "rule of law," "morality," "courage," "democracy," "individual rights," "freedom," and "civilization" in a single essay on terrorism. Terrorists must be victimized to redeem the guilt aroused whenever they disrupt or threaten the peace and tranquility promised by the existing social order. Schultz assured readers that "in this Administration our actions will be governed by the rule of law." But, "if terrorism

is truly a threat to Western moral values, our morality must not paralyze us . . . and if the enemies of these values are united, so too must the democratic countries be united in defending them." Schultz went on, "if we truly believe in the values of our civilization, we have a duty to defend them. The democracies must have the self-confidence to tackle this menacing problem. . . . We must confront the terrorist threat with the same resolve and determination that this nation has shown time and again." Fighting the battle against terrorism might get messy, but "we will not allow ourselves to descend to the level of barbarism that terrorism represents."[47]

The Role of the Media in Terrorist Violence

These motives for terrorist violence do not leave much of a role for the media in "causing" terrorist violence. The terrorist is a social creature seeking his/her own satisfying social symbols, purifying his/her guilt, and removing unsatisfactory identifications put on him/her by the enemy society by striking out at that society. By "killing" the enemy--physically or symbolically--terrorists are enacting "social dramas . . . whose proper enactment is believed necessary to community survival."[48]

These purposes are served for terrorists by participation in, not by media coverage of, the rituals. The audience moved by this kind of ritual is composed of members of radical/terrorist society. This is not a major segment of the audience attending to Western mass media channels. Rather, these are the "insiders"--people already committed to the cause."[49] "Insiders" share in the rituals by word of mouth and by prior rehearsal with participants--they do not need media channels.

Ultimately, then, terrorism more nearly "causes" media coverage than the reverse. Violent terrorism is merely another form for expressing the victimage and mortification inherent in any society. Hence terrorism is "caused" by the nature of humanity as *homo symbolicum*, and media coverage results because the dramatic nature of the events is consistent with news organizations' standards of newsworthiness.[50]

I am not arguing that terrorists do not derive satisfaction from manipulating the media or from their sudden fame. Rather, these are serendipitous benefits to actions taken as the result of some of the most powerful motives known to humanity--the motives Burke calls "Order" and "Kill."[51] The power of these motives arises from their elemental nature. This explanation of the motives of terrorists is superior to the causal view of the terrorism-media relationship, which relies upon a number of questionable assumptions. And, by providing a clear statement of the motives driving terrorism, it offers the hope of remedial action. For, if terrorism is an expressive act, its solution may lie in expressive acts.

Media Criticism as Social Action

Criticism of media coverage of terrorism is inexplicable in the absence of evidence that coverage helps or motivates terrorists. And, there appears to be no such evidence. The notion that media benefit terrorists, according to Decker and Rainey, is "based upon a number of assumptions about why media coverage *ought to* beget more terrorism or *ought to* play to the needs of the terrorist, but not upon any research which indicates that media coverage *does* anything positive for the terrorist." After studying the Munich-Olympics and Washington-Hanafi episodes, Decker and Rainey concluded that "the alleged glorification of terrorist activity by the media was in evidence little if any at all" in the news reports examined, and that the coverage of the acts in Washington and Munich seemed to avoid the opportunity to over-dramatize or over-sensationalize the situations being reported." Hence, Decker and Rainey conclude, "statements which boldly assert that media coverage provides desired publicity for the terrorist, or that the media stage is the carrot enticing terrorists to engage in more activity, or that terrorists' causes are fully and sympathetically explained by the media, are at best not descriptive and at worst misleading."[52]

However, media criticism is explicable as acts of victimage/mortification motivated by the guilt generated by media actions. The media form a miniature society within the larger society of which they are a part. And, each journalistic organization is a miniature society within a society. And, print journalists are a society within the community of all journalists, just as are television reporters, *ad infinitum*.

Humans' inability to keep commandments partly results from the fact that the commandments within a society conflict with one another, particularly as persons belong to smaller societies within society. For example, one commandment of society is that the families of the recently deceased should not be intruded upon. This conflicts with the journalistic commandment that a newsperson gets the story no matter what the cost. Another commandment of society is that criminals and lunatics should not be given access to the coveted airwaves or front pages which are reserved for government leaders and prestigious persons. This conflicts with journalistic standards of newsworthiness used in selecting and doing news (e.g., an American television network's interview with Abu Nidal led to a great furor when the network refused to disclose his whereabouts).

When such conflicts arise, society's leaders and self-appointed spokespersons will defend and uphold the principles in conflict by victimizing the journalists for their coverage through name-calling, threats of legislative

changes, and otherwise disciplining them. Similarly, members of the print journalism community may verbally victimize the members of the community of television journalists.

Within the community of journalists a great deal of mortification takes place in the form of public breast-beatings over the nature, extent, and form of media coverage of terrorism. Television networks air specials debating their coverage, newspapers attack television's excesses, and public television holds round-table discussions of commercial networks' excesses. This criticism serves as victimage/mortification motivated by the guilt that results when the behavior of journalists--even though consistent with the principles of order under which journalism is conducted--violates principles sacred to the greater society which surrounds them.

A dramatistic analysis of this internal and external media criticism promises to explain the prevalence of media-bashing in the absence of evidence that media coverage helps terrorists or harms society. The media are made scapegoats for the social order's inability to keep the peace--a very important symbol of the social order.

Besides the guilt that arises when terrorism proves that societal institutions cannot provide the peace and security they promise, there is the guilt that arises when the nation itself is "humiliated" by its impotence in dealing with terror. Dowling has shown that the perceived humiliation arising from the Iran hostage incident motivated Americans' unprecedented attention to the hostages' fate and willingness to unseat incumbent Carter in favor of candidate Reagan--who promised an era of national renewal and an end to such humiliations.[53] The same humiliation was felt in the seizure of TWA flight 847. "America, it seemed, was a nation besieged" and "America was held hostage" by the "wave of terrorism."[54] The coverage of the hijacking of TWA flight 847 "allowed [the terrorists] to maximize the humiliation of the United States."[55] Americans are proud people not accustomed to being humiliated by "lesser" people, and the public and its leaders are bound to feel guilt when the promise of a proud and unvanquished nation is broken by terrorism.

Naturally, the primary motive of Americans is to victimize the terrorists themselves. This, however, has proven difficult, as most terrorists escape American justice and/or retribution. The strength of the desire to victimize terrorists is evident in public opinion polls. During the holding of flight 847, 40% of those polled supported military retaliation against "any group with a clear connection to the hijackers," even if "we cannot identify all those responsible for the current skyjacking."[56] The victimization motive also explains why 71% of Americans polled supported the bombing of Libya while only 31% believed it would reduce terrorism. 39% and 23%, respectively, felt it would increase or have no effect on terrorism.[57]

The lack of *peace and security* and inability to bring terrorists to *justice* (to use two of the most powerful symbols of American social order) creates not just guilt, but a sense of vulnerability and unease that are hard to live with (Maslow would call this an unmet safety need). In fact, in a case of the *post hoc* fallacy, many have argued that creating this sense of fear and unease is the terrorists' purpose. Livingstone, for example, argues that "the objective of terrorism is to convey a pervasive sense of vulnerability, with the fear that accompanies it, to all those who witness the act or to whom it is communicated."[58]

While terrorists' purpose may not be the creation of fear, people are made afraid by terrorist acts. Gerbner's research has shown that exposure to media violence, including terrorist violence, "cultivates a differential sense of vulnerability," and that media coverage of terrorism "cultivated a sense of imminent danger."[59]

So, someone has to be mortified/victimized to expiate the guilt created by the violation of conflicting commandments, the humiliation, and the fear and sense of vulnerability created by terrorists. And, the terrorists themselves too often are beyond reach. Hence, we either must mortify ourselves or select a scapegoat from among us. The media are the people's choice. Print journalists prefer to victimize television journalists, and television prefers to mortify itself. The public and academicians victimize all journalists.

The Sins of the Media

The finger-pointing and listing of the sins of journalists both distributes the guilt and, by its condemnatory and public nature, verbally victimizes journalists. One crime is that coverage of terrorism may "undermine Washington's efforts to cope with the crisis."[60] Or, as Schlesinger wrote, "as the media glare intensifies and the crisis protracts, the plight of the Trans World Airlines hostages will increasingly obsess and haunt the Reagan Administration. Its ability to address other issues will wither. . . . The government itself will become a Shiite hostage too."[61]

Besides damaging government efforts to deal with terrorists, the media are guilty of giving the terrorists what they want "out of the news media: a conduit for their demands."[62] Hanley, a journalist, asserts that "above all, terrorism succeeds by keeping the terrorist's cause in the spotlight."[63] Giving terrorists what they want is a crime whether terrorists know what is good for them or not. If terrorists wanted torture and beatings, those who provided them might well feel guilt.

Another crime committed by journalists is allowing terrorists to manipulate them. The manipulation may or may not do anything positive for terrorists. The offense is in being manipulated, not in any benefits terrorists derive from the manipulation. Hickey, for example quotes psychiatrist Dr. David Hubbard as concluding, after interviewing many

terrorists, that they "all say essentially the same thing about the media, he insists: that 'they are fools who permit themselves to be used as simply as punching an elevator button.'"[64] Academician Klaidman reports that "some terrorists play television about as skillfully as Vladimir Horowitz plays the piano, thereby implicating often unwitting journalists in their criminal schemes."[65]

Klaidman, Hickey and Hubbard overlook the possibility that the terrorists' apparent satisfaction with their ability to "manipulate" the media may result from their rejection of the social order and subsequent rejection of the media as a pawn of the hated system--a pawn to be victimized through manipulation since the real enemy (the system) cannot be made the scapegoat. The desire to overcome the enemy through the consummatory act of manipulating the media is a more likely explanation for terrorists' occasional demands for access to media forums than the suggestion that they expect to persuade mass audiences through their rantings about foreign ideologies.[66]

The Sins of Television

The brunt of criticism about terrorism coverage is borne by television. Television is criticized by government, by academics, by print journalists, and by itself.

According to the *Columbia Journalism Review*, "the most vigorous criticism of the networks . . . was not that they overplayed the story but that they played into the hands of the terrorists by giving them a forum for their views and demands."[67] According to academician Goldman, modern political terrorism is an "example of a message awaiting the proper delivery system. . . . It wasn't until the commercial development of television . . . that an ideal vehicle for the dissemination of their [terrorists] philosophies assured that the actions would be received by the masses."[68] According to one print editorial, "Terrorism did not begin with television and will not end should television choose to ignore it. But the question of whether it is wise to grant terrorists publicity by covering them as news lingers."[69]

Perhaps television's greatest sin is that it violates the hierarchical rules of the society. One way television does this is that it elevates terrorists--low in the hierarchy--to a higher status reserved for national leaders. According to print journalist Novak, television "treat[s] the terrorists as partners in negotiation with, and of equal standing with, the U.S. government."[70] Although perhaps not fearing they would put terrorists on the level with social leaders, Henry discouraged press conferences by saying they "allow [terrorists] to humanize their image."[71]

Some critics are very sensitive to this kind of violation. When a discussant said terrorists and the President of the U.S. both manipulated the media during terrorist incidents, former undersecretary of state Eagleburger said, "I cannot let pass a comparison between the President of the United States and a bunch of terrorists who take

hostages."[72] The thought that two persons so far apart under the terms of the social hierarchy might be related in any way was too much for Eagleburger to accept. "The President of the United States" and "a bunch of terrorists" sound like different species even without Eagleburger's considerable nonverbal supplements of the words.

Journalists are criticized for not maintaining the distinctions made by the mainstream hierarchy between various groups of persons. For example, Fred Barnes of the *New Republic* was angered at reporters of the flight 847 incident whose actions appeared to remove the moral distinctions between American hostages in Beirut and Shiites held in Israeli prisons. By going to interview Shiite families "and treat[ing] them as the same as American families," they created "this idea of moral equivalence, which was a phony moral equivalence."[73]

Similarly, terrorism coverage gives television journalists an unjustifiably high status. Print journalist Corry reports that "television confers a peculiar authority on anchormen [*sic*]. . . . Therefore we listen to the anchormen [*sic*] as much as we do to their words. . . . When they speak, it must be important. When Mr. Rather interviewed Mr. Berri, he was not a reporter; celebrity status made him a policy maker."[74] Academician Goldman believes the conventions of television journalism produce an effect in which "even when crisis events occur, unexpectedly, the network is prepared to deal with them and can cover nearly any situation. Often, as the events play themselves out, it appears that the networks are more in control of events that the governments involved in attempting to solve the crisis."[75]

Media critic Henry has perceptively observed that the conflict between journalism and society is a conflict between the conflicting commandments of the two worlds. He obviously did not see things in Burke's sense, but he clearly sees that journalists cross the public when they follow hierarchies others than that of mainstream society.

> A fundamental problem that the press has . . . is that journalists seem to think not that they're citizens of the United States, States but that they're either citizens of the world or citizens of the kingdom of journalism. Objectivity gets amok and they think that being neutral means not displaying any of the basic sympathies that their audiences do. Now you can avoid being a booster and you can avoid being a jingoist and still report as an American.

Television journalism also is guilty of violating its own symbols of order. Journalism has many rules, and print journalist Novak believes many were violated in covering the TWA flight 847 incident.

> During the 17-day saga, the sins of television were many: 1. It never followed up obvious facts, and presented distortions of facts (the actual treatment of the hostages, as later revealed). 2. It distorted the reality by magnifying personal emotions, while ignoring the training camps of terror. 3. Television allowed itself to be hijacked by showing only what the terrorists allowed it to show. 4. Television journalists took an adversarial role against their own government, but not against the leaders of the terrorists and those at whose command they serve.[76]

Other principles of the journalistic society allegedly have been violated by television. Journalists are to be objective observers/reporters of events, but never part them. Print journalist Alter thought that in at least one case, television journalists "crossed the line from covering the story to becoming part of it."[77] Congressman Feighan accused reporters covering the hijacking of flight 847 of "stepping over that line" by acting as negotiators rather than as journalists.[78]

Another tenet of journalism is that what is covered is judged on the basis of objective journalistic standards. While the clarity of these standards remains unknown, applying any other standards violates one of the central tenets under which journalists operate, hence making violators guilty of a great transgression. Academician Klaidman believes television coverage of terrorism "is driven by ratings, not news judgments."[79] Former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger examined journalists justifications of terrorism coverage only to conclude that "all of this stuff about the public's right to know is simply a cover for the basic concern for ratings."[80]

The final sin of television journalism is that it "appears to come close to rationalizing terrorism." Print journalist Corry's point is that television makes terrorism "not something just to be deplored, then; it is something to be understood." To this extent, then because of television, "it has become difficult to regard terrorism as insane, immoral or criminal."[81] Under the reigning symbols of the existing social order, terrorism must be regarded as evil in every way in order to justify both the hierarchy that promises to protect us from such fears and to justify violence against terrorists. As Gerbner notes, only by calling people barbarians can we justify acting barbarically toward them, only by calling people criminals can we treat them in a criminal fashion, and only by calling people terrorists can we terrorize them.[82] Television is culpable because it denies the symbolic means for justifying our use of terrorists as scapegoats for our fear and guilt.

The Media Defend Themselves

The media seem to defend themselves in terms of the principles of their own social order as well as in terms of the principles of order of mainstream society. To illustrate the former, journalists inevitably defend themselves by claiming they are "just covering the news," and that they are being "objective." To illustrate the latter, they argue that coverage does not make heroes out of terrorists and that the media are not manipulated. Fully developing this argument requires a separate paper, but ABC News President Roone Arledge's response to critics of the coverage of flight 847 is typical and succinct. "Anybody who thinks that [the 847 hijackers] won the battle for the hearts and minds of America or that we were somehow victimized and they were sophisticated I think misses the point."[83]

The media, first, are victims of the need for victimage which arises from the conflicting commandments governing the larger society and its parts. Second, the media serve as scapegoats for the guilt felt by leaders unable to provide peace and security. Third, the media are scapegoated for the guilt the audience feels for attending to media that have violated important commandments of the social order. And, finally, the media defend themselves by raising the important symbols of their own social order as well as by attempting to show that their actions are consistent with the symbols of order of mainstream society.

Conclusions

The dramatistic approach taken here is beneficial because it provides what a good theory ought to provide. That is, it allows us to understand terrorism, to predict the forms in which it will appear, and to pursue efforts to control it. This analysis supports the validity of dramatistic analysis and suggests that its range includes both terrorist societies and journalistic societies.

Terrorism is not a unique form of behavior. Rather, it is a species of the genus of human social action. We can predict terrorism to the extent that when people reject an existing social order to establish one that rejects the existing symbols and principles of order we know that they will engage in victimage and mortification of the sort found in terrorism. We cannot control terrorism, but knowledge of its purposes provides hope that we might learn to avoid the estrangements that necessitate this violence. At least we might guess that negative labelling of terrorists may motivate further violent acts of redemption. Perhaps in the future we can find alternative peaceful means for terrorists' redemption.

For now we have evidence to respond to those who advocate censorship of media journalism on the basis of the argument that media coverage is one of the primary motives for terrorist violence. This is no inconsiderable accomplishment for anyone who values free speech. We also have discovered a clear and elegant explanation of what motivates the frequent, diverse, and strong condemnations of media practices that follow terrorist incidents against U.S. citizens or interests. If we can explain the calls for censorship and other verbal victimizations and mortifications of the media we may be able to avoid falling prey to them ourselves when confronted with the plausible but unsubstantiated arguments that media coverage aids and abets terrorists. This, too, is no small accomplishment.

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